

# **Newhall School District Governance Handbook**

## **Governing Board Members**

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Mrs. Donna Rose

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## **Superintendent**

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Mr. Jeff Pelzel



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## ***Empowering Every Child Every Day***

*This handbook reflects the governance team's work on creation of a framework for effective governance. This involves ongoing discussions about unity of purpose, commitment to norms and coming to agreement on protocols for formal structures that will enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all children.*

NEWHALL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK

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## ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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### ***Governance – A Definition***

*School district governance is the act of transforming the needs, wishes and desires of the community into policies that direct the community's schools.*

There are four dimensions to the effective governance of any organization. Effective governance tenets encompass the basic characteristics and behaviors that enable governance team members to effectively create a climate for excellence in a school district and maintain the focus on improved student learning and achievement. The governance responsibilities of Newhall School District are organized into these four elements.

#### **They are:**

1. Governing as a unified team with a common vision;
2. Governing within the role of the trustee;
3. Creating and sustaining a positive governance culture;
4. Protocols and procedures to facilitate governance leadership.

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## UNITY OF PURPOSE

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Unity of purpose includes a common focus, priority goals, and the values and beliefs governance team members share about children, the District and public education that help to transcend individual differences and fulfill a greater purpose.

### **Vision:**

Empowering Every Child Every Day

### **Mission:**

Newhall School District students will become global citizens who think critically, solve problems, embrace diversity in people and viewpoints, and have a passion for learning and the arts.

### **Collective Commitments:**

The Newhall School District Community will:

- Collaborate and build on each other's strengths
- Innovate for the future
- Persevere through new and challenging learning opportunities
- Excel and continuously strive for improvement

Governing Board Core Values:

Fiscal Responsibility

Program Integrity

A Quality and Safe Learning and Working Environment

Curriculum and Instructional Continuity

Fair and Equitable Compensation for All Employees

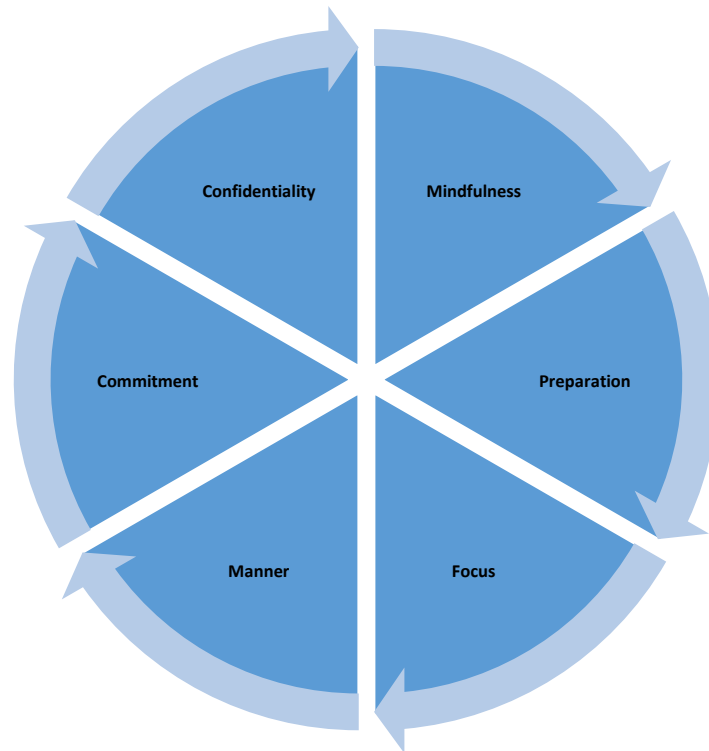
Commit to staying informed on relevant issues

## OUR GOVERNANCE TEAM'S UNITY OF PURPOSE

As defined by Board Bylaws 9005, Governance Standards, we agree to-

- Keep the District focused on learning and achievement for *ALL* students
- Communicate a common vision
- Operate openly, with trust and integrity
- Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect
- Govern with Board-adopted policies and procedures
- Take collective responsibility for the Board's performance
- Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community
- Commit to continuing education, which may include, but is not limited to, Masters in Governance (MIG) training sponsored by the California School Boards Association (CSBA)

### **Six Characteristics of an Effective Trustee**



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## GOVERNANCE ROLES

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There are important distinctions to be made between the Board's role and that of the Superintendent and staff. All Board members are equal under the law, and authority rests with the Board as a whole. Direction is given to the Superintendent only at Board meetings through actions taken by the Board. Just as Board members should govern and not manage a school district, Superintendents should not administer a District in isolation from the representatives whom the public has entrusted with the schools. School Board "trustees" are the representatives of the people, elected to ensure that a community's schools educate the community's children in accordance with the wishes of the local community.

It is important to understand and respect the separate roles of the Board and Superintendent, yet work together as a "governance team" taking collective responsibility for building unity and creating a positive organizational culture.

### **The Governance Team described the ROLE of the Board as...**

*Working in partnership with the Superintendent to provide visionary, strategic transformational leadership for Newhall School District by fulfilling California School Boards Association's five responsibilities of the Board:*

1. Setting the Direction for the District;
2. Establishing an Efficient and Effective Organizational Structure through policies that support enhanced student learning and achievement;
3. Ensuring a Supportive Environment within the District;
4. Ensuring the Accountability of the District to the community and;
5. Demonstrating Community Leadership.

### **The Governance Team described the ROLE of the Superintendent as...**

*Serving as the Chief Executive Officer for the District by supporting student learning and achievement through instructional and non-instructional programs, providing leadership in fulfilling the District's vision and goals, and supporting the ability of the Board to govern effectively. The Superintendent ...*

1. Maintains clear and effective communication with all stakeholders;
2. Keeps the focus on student learning and achievement;
3. Ensures that all District efforts are focused on District vision and goals;
4. Implements the decisions of the Board;
5. Manages the day-to-day operations of the District.

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## PERFORMING GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

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California School Boards Association defines the five responsibilities of School Boards, as one body, as:

### ***Setting the direction for the community's schools by . . .***

- Focusing on student learning
- Assessing needs/ obtain baseline data
- Generating, reviewing or revising setting direction documents (beliefs, vision, priorities, strategic goals, success indicators)
- Ensuring an appropriate inclusive process is used
- Ensuring these documents are the driving force for all District efforts
- Approving the Local Control and Accountability Plan

### ***Establishing an effective and efficient structure for the school district by...***

- Employing and supporting the Superintendent; set policy for hiring of other personnel
- Overseeing the development of and adopt policies
- Setting a direction for and adopt the curriculum
- Establishing budget priorities, adopt the budget and oversee facilities issues
- Providing direction for and voting to accept collective bargaining agreements

### ***Providing support through our behavior and actions by...***

- Acting with professional demeanor that models the District's beliefs and vision
- Making decisions and provide resources that support mutually agreed upon priorities and goals
- Upholding District policies the Board has approved
- Ensuring a positive working climate exists
- Being knowledgeable about District efforts

### ***Ensuring accountability to the public by...***

- Evaluating the Superintendent
- Monitoring, reviewing and revising policies, and serving as a judicial and appeals body
- Monitoring student achievement and program effectiveness and requiring program changes as indicated
- Monitoring and adjusting District finances as necessary
- Monitoring the collective bargaining process

### ***Demonstrating community leadership by . . .***

- Speaking with a common voice about District priorities, goals and issues
- Engaging and involving the community in school activities
- Communicating clear information about policies, programs and fiscal condition
- Educating the community and the media about the issues facing the District and public education
- Advocating for students, District programs and public education to the general public, the community, and local, state and national leaders

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## GOVERNANCE CULTURE

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The community elects school Board members to set and monitor the direction of the school district, and the District Superintendent translates all efforts into action. To be effective, it is vital that the Board and Superintendent have a respectful and productive working relationship based on trust and open communication. The Superintendent and trustees agree on these key elements:

### **Newhall School District Meeting Guidelines:**

#### ***We agree to...***

- *Keep the focus on the best interest of the students*
- *Be open to, and respectful of, the ideas of others*
- *Be responsible to the team – before, during and after the meetings*
- *Avoid hidden agendas – put everything on the table*
- *Monitor our own airtime during discussions to allow others to actively participate*
- *Strive to keep discussions at 20 minutes*
- *Work toward the future – learn from the past*
- *Be firm and decisive on issues*

#### **The Board supports the Superintendent’s ability to fulfill his/her responsibilities by:**

- *Providing support, trust, respect and honesty in their interactions*
- *Being prepared for Board meetings and asking questions prior to the meetings*
- *Participating with Monday morning check-in calls each week*
- *Respecting confidentiality*
- *Practicing the “no surprises” rule at all times*
- *Respecting and recognizing the role District staff play in implementing systems*
- *Staying in their role*
- *Informing the Superintendent ahead of time when planning to visit schools or meet with employees*
- *Participating in the Board Policy Review subcommittee on a rotational basis*

#### **The Superintendent supports the Board’s ability to fulfill its responsibilities by:**

- *Providing transparency and making sure all Board members are informed*
- *Providing multi-levels of communication, including using a shared FAQ google doc to address questions Board members have prior to a meeting*
- *Creating a balanced agenda and monitoring the length of time spent on each agenda item*



- *Offering a balance of perspectives – and pros and cons*
- *Practicing the “no surprise”*
- *Collaborating and communicating effectively with stakeholders*
- *Maintaining a formal, respectful demeanor*
- *Providing expertise, creative problem-solving and a variety of options*

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## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND PROCESSES

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To effectively meet District challenges, the Board and Superintendent must function together as a governance leadership team. The following protocols were developed to support and promote the effectiveness of the governance team and to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among Board members, the Superintendent, District staff, students, and the community. The protocols were developed for and by the members of the governance team and may be modified over time as needed.

### Newhall School District Protocols

The Board is a legal entity composed of five members that makes decisions and provides direction, as a whole. Individuals are members of the Board and can only act as a Board when three or more members (or majority of the quorum) provide direction.

#### *Issue: Board presentations and agenda items, meeting courtesies*

- The Board President recognizes speakers and the speaker should be informed of the time limit.
- The Board will use a customized version of Robert’s Rules of Order as its manual for parliamentary procedures.
- Individuals who wish to address the Board on a specific item listed on the agenda are encouraged to submit their speaker’s card prior to hearing the agenda item.
- The Board President will recognize the speaker and inform him/her of the time limit that he/she has to speak.
- Presenters scheduled on the agenda need to prepare and submit their written materials in advance of the School Board meeting so the Board has ample time to review the documentation prior to discussion and taking action.
- The presenter should provide an overview, not to exceed 10-15 minutes, stressing the most important points (exception for LCAP, budget, special Board requests).
- School Board members commit to reading all written materials provided to them prior to the Board meeting in order to be prepared to conduct business and support an efficiently run meeting.

- The Board will ask questions and monitor its own time and comments.
- Feedback and input sought from all Board members during the meeting.
- The Board may consider holding study sessions for policy review, budget discussions, and other special projects.

*Issue: Length of meetings*

- A 12-month Board agenda calendar will be used to balance the length of meetings.
- At 9:30 p.m. the Board President will ask for an assessment of the items remaining on the agenda in order to ascertain whether we will be able to hold to a 10:30 p.m. conclusion or whether items can or should be continued onto the next meeting or a special meeting of the Board.

*Issue: Requests for specific action by an individual Board member*

- The Board agrees that individual Board members requesting a specific action will consult with both the Superintendent and the Board President, who will decide if the action will be taken or whether the Board as a whole needs to be consulted to request action. The decision to bring the request to the full Board will be based on whether the action can occur within an existing policy or whether it sets new policy.
- There are opportunities to suggest agenda items at the end of each Board meeting when topics for upcoming meetings are listed and/or when the Superintendent presents a 12-month Board meeting topic calendar.
- The Superintendent will use the Board President as a sounding Board if any request for action is a cause for staff discomfort.

*Issue: Use of technology for Board/Board, Board/Superintendent/Cabinet communications*

- Information and opinions sent by the Board members can be shared via electronic communication but may be copied to only one other board member and/or the Superintendent. There can be no “serial” electronic communication forwarding.
- The Superintendent, from time to time, will use e-mail to disseminate information to all Board members.
- A courtesy copy to the Board President or Superintendent should be included unless the communication is of a private nature.
- Copy legal counsel as needed consistent with Board Policy.
- Board members will be conscientious of their individual role as a Board member when using social media.

*Issue: Requests for Board member expenses/reimbursements*

- Requests will be informally shared with the whole Board at a meeting prior to incurring any expense. This discussion allows all Board members to be knowledgeable about expenditures from the Board's budget and to achieve consensus on activities of members.

*Issue: Attendance at community events as a representative of the Board and "Sharing the Space"*

- Members will notify the Board President and Superintendent if they will be attending a community event or meeting as a representative of the Board and District.
- To the degree possible, the Board should be providing the opportunity, and allocating opportunities, to all of its members to represent the Board at various events and meetings. Members should strive for equal levels of participation, if possible. While this is a goal, it is understood that the Board President has a unique role at certain functions.

*Issue: Communications with the press*

- The President serves as spokesperson for the Board. If the President is unavailable, the Clerk will serve as spokesperson. If the Clerk is unavailable, the Clerk Pro-Tem will serve as spokesperson.
- If Board members are uncomfortable responding to the press they should defer to the President.
- Board members are advised to check with the President or Superintendent prior to speaking with the press, if time permits.
- These press protocols are not intended to limit Board members' interaction with the press as it relates to election campaigns.

*Issue: Closed Session*

- Board members have an absolute obligation to maintain confidentiality of Closed Session items.

